Discovers Grave of Prominent Civil War Veterans

While the Editor of the Nassau County Review was walking through the Freeport Cemetery the morning of Decoration Day he ran across Rev. J. Sidney Gould, pastor of the Presbyterian Church, who was explaining to Rev. Seckerson, Chaplain of the G. A. R., the discoveries of the gravestones of important fighters of the Civil War and of special import to the members of the local D. B. P. Mott Post. We later induced Dr. Gould to write us an item on this important find, which he has done, and which we have the pleasure of presenting herewith:

Last spring a lady from Norfolk, Va., visiting friends in Freeport applied to the pastor of the Presbyterian Church for information as to whom she could secure to clear away the wild growth of several decades from a lot in the old Village Cemetery. This lady was introduced as Mrs. Hague. She said the lot was marked by a monument to two uncles of hers who had served as soldiers in the Civil War, and she added that she believed the local Post of the Grand Army of the Republic was named for these two men. She was referred to Furman Seaman, who is the caretaker of the church and who knows more about the old cemetery and its silent inhabitants than any man living. Mr. Seaman’s father before him held the position in his lifetime that the son inherited at his father’s death. So in course of two generations a pretty comprehensive history of the dead has accumulated in the Seaman family and is now held by Furman Seaman. Mr. Seaman relates now how in 1861 he ran away three times and tried to enlist, but being only fourteen years old, was each time turned down. So he has first hand and vivid knowledge of those days and young men of almost three score years ago about whom our story runs.

In course of time the jungle yielded several marble monuments. One was a more recent granite, but one was old-fashioned and moldy with age. The writer knowing that there were two soldiers commemorated by this monument went over to the spot to read the inscription and what he read made his blood tingle and the tears come to his eyes at the thought of the youthful heroism of a boy who had once walked these self-same paths.

Read the legend for yourself, friend, and consider the work of the boys of 1861 in the light of what our boys have been doing. It runs as follows: “Joseph Mott, a member of Co. H, 4th Heavy Artillery, N. Y. Vol., died in Rebel prison, Salisbury, N. C., Oct., 1864, aged 19 yrs. and 6 mos., having served his country faithfully for 3 yrs. in the war against the great rebellion. He was in the following battles, viz.: Wilderness, Spotsylvania, North Anna, Cold Harbor, Sheldon Farm, Front of Petersburg, June 18 and 30t, and Deep Bottom. At the battle of Reams Station, Aug. 19, 1864, he was taken and died as above from exposure and starvation.”
It is an unusually long inscription for a small village stone, but how eloquent! Here was a boy who gave his life at 19 yrs. and 6 mos. After having campaigned for three years and fought in eight battles, five of which were among the bloodiest of the war. He died of exposure and starvation in those terrible days when the Confederates could not get food for themselves much less for “Yankee” prisoners. The day of his death not known, only the month recorded, and the boy laid hastily away by unfriendly hands.

But on the other side of this simple stone was mute testimony to a more remarkable career. No braver, no more heroic a man, but younger than his brother Joseph. The following was cut into the marble: “Dandridge B. Mott, a member of Co. H, 199th N. Y. Vol., fell on the field of battle at Pine Mt., Ga., June 16, 1864, aged 17 yrs., 2 mos., 24 da., having fought bravely in defense of his country in the following battles, viz., Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, Bridgeport, Lookout Valley and Mountain, Dugout Gap and the series of battles from Snake Gap to Pine Mountain under the commands of the brave Howard and Hooker.”

Here is the record of a boy of 16 passing through the three awful days of Gettysburg, who barely past the 16th birthday, fought through Chancellorsville. We have looked on our boys of 18, 19 and 20 as being too young for so desperate an adventure as a great war, but these fellows in their teens saved the Union.

So this family from which two sons went out to fight saw them come back no more. Old Capt. Willett Mott, the father, was a seafaring man who carried on a schooner trade from Norfolk to New York. His cargo was usually wheat and corn up and manufactured articles down the coast. The mother had been Sarah Shapman from up-State near Poughkeepsie. There were other children, Frank and Wallace; too young to see any service, who after growing to manhood, lingered on Long Island a while and then moved into Virginia, and there was “Little Lanny” who lived only a few years, and Sarah Eliza, who married and made her home in Virginia where her daughter Sarah was born, who became Mrs. Hague whose quest last spring brought this heroic family to our attention once more.

Capt. Mott himself was not too old to be moved with patriotic fervor and so gave himself to his country and during the war commanded a transport that plied from New York to Norfolk and helped to keep the Northern Army supplied. He survived the war and the loss of his two oldest boys only a few years and in 1870 at the age of 51 years he passed on to meet his boys.

On last Memorial Day the Post had its attention called to this monument and it adjourned from its accustomed place of meeting to conclude its exercises in an impressive manner near the stone erected to the memory of the two heroic sons of Freeport for whom the Post is named, and it was then and there decided that hereafter the exercises of the Grand
Army of the Republic shall be held there. Doubtless some action will be taken to worthily recognize these splendid boys and perpetuate the memory of their heroism.